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REVIEWS OF BOOKS

BOOKS OF ANCIENT HISTORY

Ancient Records of Egypt. Historic Documents, from the Earliest Times to the Persian Conquest. Collected, edited and translated, with commentary, by JAMES HENRY BREASTED, Ph.D., Professor of Egyptology and Oriental History in the University of Chicago. Four volumes. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press. 1906. Pp. xlii, 344; xxviii, 428; xxviii, 279; xxviii, 520; and index volume.)

WHILE the historical records of Babylonia and Assyria have long been accessible, in handy form, in Schrader's well known *Keilinschriftliche Bibliothek*, it is somewhat remarkable that up to the present time there has been no similar provision for the study of the records of ancient Egypt. Scattered as they are through a large number of publications, many of them difficult of access, it has been no easy matter even for the trained Egyptologist to obtain a comprehensive survey of the field, while for those students who must consult the sources of Egyptian history through the medium of translations the difficulties have been well-nigh insuperable. A considerable number of important inscriptions are translated in *Records of the Past*, but they are merely selections, made upon no very definite plan, from the great mass of existing material, and with the rapid progress of Egyptology the translations in that series are now, with few exceptions, completely antiquated. For more recent translations, where they exist, search must be made through a wide range of Egyptological literature, and in any case, until the appearance of Professor Breasted's *Ancient Records*, prolonged study was necessary before the student could assure himself that his material approached completeness. It may be questioned whether any student of Egyptian history can ever carry on independent investigation of the subject without a competent knowledge of the Egyptian language, just as no one would attempt to investigate French history without a knowledge of French, or Roman history without a knowledge of Latin. Yet by the aid of reliable translations, and such other help as can be furnished by the Egyptological specialist, much can be accomplished, and it must be admitted that Professor Breasted's work has made the conditions as favorable as possible. In its four volumes he has given practically everything of importance for Egyptian history that is to be found in the whole range of Egyptian literature, as at present known, from the earliest period down to the Persian conquest. The plan of

the work is thoroughly systematic. The texts, arranged in chronological order, are given in English translation, each text being preceded by a brief introduction setting forth the historical significance of the document, its character, and occasionally a summary of its contents, while copious foot-notes describe the individual monuments, give all necessary bibliographical information, and furnish a running commentary dealing with such matters as may require explanation. The first volume also contains a valuable discussion of the documentary sources of Egyptian history, and a very clear exposition of the complicated subject of Egyptian chronology. The mere assemblage of the material for the work must have involved a prodigious amount of labor and this was increased by the general unreliability of the published Egyptian inscriptions and the resulting necessity for collating anew nearly every monument translated in order to secure a trustworthy text as the basis of the work. For this purpose Professor Breasted had exceptional advantages. His connection with the great Egyptian dictionary, now being prepared in Germany, gave him access to all the valuable material gathered for that work, and enabled him to copy from the originals nearly all the historical monuments of Egypt in the various European museums, and a stay in Egypt afforded further opportunities. These advantages he has fully utilized, and the general accuracy of the texts upon which his translations are based may be regarded as assured. The close attention which he has given to this fundamental requirement is characteristic of the thoroughness of his work in all particulars.

In regard to the selection of his material Professor Breasted has shown excellent judgment. In the great mass of Egyptian literature it is not always easy to decide just what constitutes historical material and what does not. In the broader sense the religious, scientific, legal, and commercial documents may very fairly claim to rank as historical material, and perhaps the more purely literary compositions as well, since all these throw light upon important phases of ancient Egyptian civilization. Yet these monuments, for the most part at least, fall more properly within the sphere of archaeology than of history, and the preservation of a just proportion demands their exclusion from a work specially devoted to the assemblage of historical documents. Occasional exceptions have, however, been made with advantage. Thus, the several testamentary dispositions included among the records of the Old Empire (*e. g.*, Vol. I., §§ 190, 200, 213) not only serve to fill out the rather scanty material available for this period but also contribute important facts, while the contracts of the nomarch Hepzefi with the priests of Siut (Vol. I., § 535 ff.) afford invaluable information in regard to the constitution of the nome during the feudal period. The tale of Sinuhe (Vol. I., § 486 ff.) is undoubtedly to be classed with the historical romances so popular with the ancient Egyptians, but it was certainly written at a time when the memory of the historical events alluded to was still fresh, and the date given in it for the death of

Amenemhet I. is corroborated by the monuments. The introductory narrative may therefore be accepted as essentially historical, and the fact that it contains the earliest known account of Palestine would alone constitute ample justification for its insertion.

With regard to the Sphinx Stele (Vol. II., § 810 ff.) and the Bentresh Stele (Vol. III., § 429 ff.) the case is not so clear. Both these monuments are certainly apocryphal, as Professor Breasted of course points out. They were composed at a late period for the purpose of enhancing the importance of certain deities, and the Bentresh Stele, especially, is full of historical absurdities, though it may possibly preserve the traces of a genuine tradition. The introductory narrative of the Westcar Papyrus and the legendary account of the beginning of the Hyksos wars in Sallier I. would seem to have quite as good a claim to be included in the work, though both are omitted. Nevertheless these texts are interesting, and it was probably well to include them as specimens of what the Egyptians themselves regarded as history, especially as it is now well known that both Herodotus and Manetho drew largely from just such sources as these. It perhaps is to be regretted that, except the Abydos inscription of the reign of Khenzer (Vol. I., § 781), Professor Breasted does not give any monuments of the Hyksos period. The historical material for this period is so scanty that even the smallest scrap of information is important, and at least the date (thirty-third year of Apophis) from the Rhind Mathematical Papyrus, or the Bubastis inscription of Apophis (Naville, *Bubastis*, I. 35 c) might well have found a place. Omissions of this kind are, however, so rare that they only emphasize the general completeness of Professor Breasted's work.

The translations exhibit the same careful attention to matters of detail that is everywhere apparent. Lacunae, restorations, variant readings, and words of doubtful import are carefully marked, and while comparison with the original is facilitated by numbering the lines in superior type, the text is conveniently divided into paragraphs in accordance with the subject matter. The employment of headings, indicating the contents of the respective paragraphs, may be noted as a useful device. Paraphrases are scrupulously avoided and the endeavor has been made to give a rendering as closely literal as possible without doing violence to English idiom. In this difficult endeavor Professor Breasted has been, as a rule, most successful, and his translations are in all respects the best that have as yet appeared in English. Here and there, perhaps, his close adherence to the phrasing of the original may cause some difficulty, but in all such cases the needful explanation is furnished by the foot-notes. A close translation of this character, which faithfully reproduces the spirit and flavor of the original, is certainly, in spite of some occasional harshness, far better than a smooth rendering in which the difficulties are glossed over and a thoroughly un-Egyptian point of view is read into the texts.

Although the *Ancient Records* is designed chiefly for historical students not possessing a knowledge of Egyptian, and admirably fulfills that purpose, it is safe to say that it will be no less useful to the student of Egyptology. While the most advanced Egyptologist may consult it with profit, to the less experienced scholar it will prove an invaluable boon. Nowhere else can he find grouped together such a comprehensive body of material, arranged moreover in thoroughly convenient form. The very reliable translations supply a safe guide, especially needful in view of the fact that no complete Egyptian dictionary as yet exists; the succinct bibliographies accompanying the individual texts furnish a useful key to the literature of the subject, and in regard to all matters of detail the introductions and notes yield a fund of valuable information which the learner could gather for himself only at the expense of much weary toil. In wideness of scope, thoroughness of treatment extending to the minutest details, systematic arrangement, and conscientious scholarship Professor Breasted's *Ancient Records* takes high rank, and it can not be doubted that it will have a most important influence upon Egyptological studies in the domains both of history and of philology. In the preface the author intimates that he may, in the future, treat in a similar manner the religious, scientific, literary, legal, and commercial documents of ancient Egypt. It is to be hoped that his implied intention may be carried into effect. The whole body of Egyptian literature ought to be made accessible, and no one is better qualified to do the work than Professor Breasted.

CHRISTOPHER JOHNSTON.

Egyptological Researches. Results of a Journey in 1904. By W.

MAX MÜLLER. (Washington: Published by the Carnegie Institution. 1906. Pp. 62.)

IN this volume the author presents the results of his work in Egypt during the summer and autumn of 1904, gathering his material partly from the more recent accessions of the Cairo Museum, and partly from the site of ancient Thebes. It contains 106 plates, chiefly of hieroglyphic inscriptions, but comprising also reproductions in heliotype and in color of reliefs and mural paintings, preceded by 62 pages of commentary and descriptive matter. While some of the monuments here published may justly claim to rank as recent discoveries, Professor Müller's prime object has been, not to discover new inscriptions, but to secure accurate copies of inscriptions already known. The urgent need for such work will be appreciated by every Egyptologist, and has been strongly emphasized by the great advances in Egyptian grammatical studies made during the past two decades. The value of Professor Müller's critical work in the study of Egyptian texts has already been demonstrated in his excellent edition of the famous treaty of Ramses II. with the Hittites (*Mittheilungen der Vorderasiatischen Gesellschaft*, 1902, 5), and the present volume affords additional evi-